

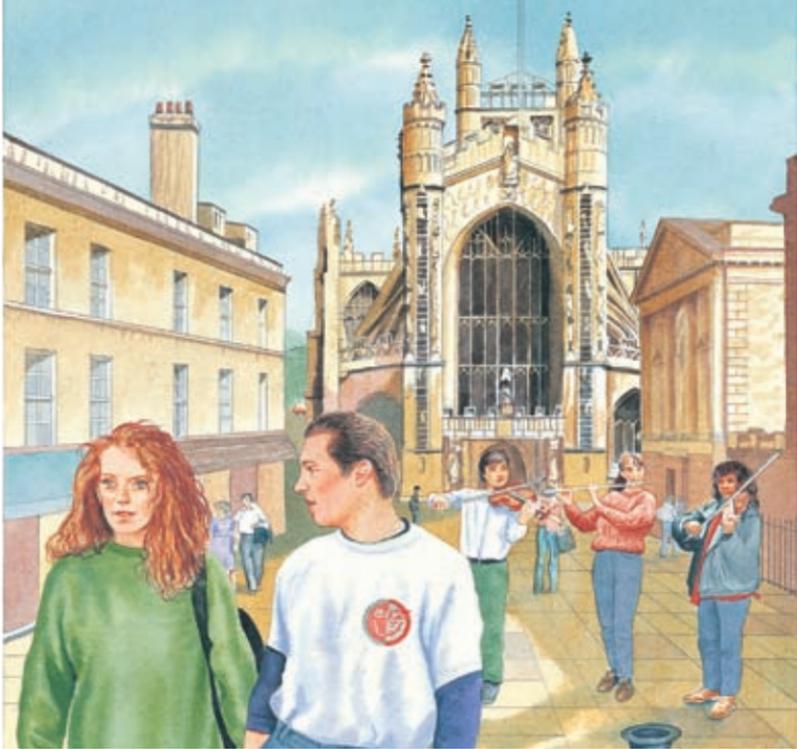


PENGUIN READERS



The Missing Coins

John Escott



Bath is a very old city in England. It has a beautiful Abbey. A lot of people visit the city every year. And in the summer there are always a lot of tourists in the streets.

Pete and Carla are students in Bath. They like the city. Pete likes looking at the beautiful old buildings. Carla likes walking in the little streets. She often finds pretty little shops there and goes into them. Or she sits with Pete in a café and watches the tourists.

It's a Saturday in summer and a hot afternoon. There are a lot of tourists in the city today. People from many countries are going into the Abbey.

'Let's find a quiet street, away from the tourists,' Carla says.

'OK,' Pete says. He likes being with Carla.

They walk away from the Abbey.

After some time, they are in a little street behind the Abbey.

‘This is pretty,’ Carla says.

There are only two or three tourists in this street. The shops have small windows. Some houses have pretty little gardens.

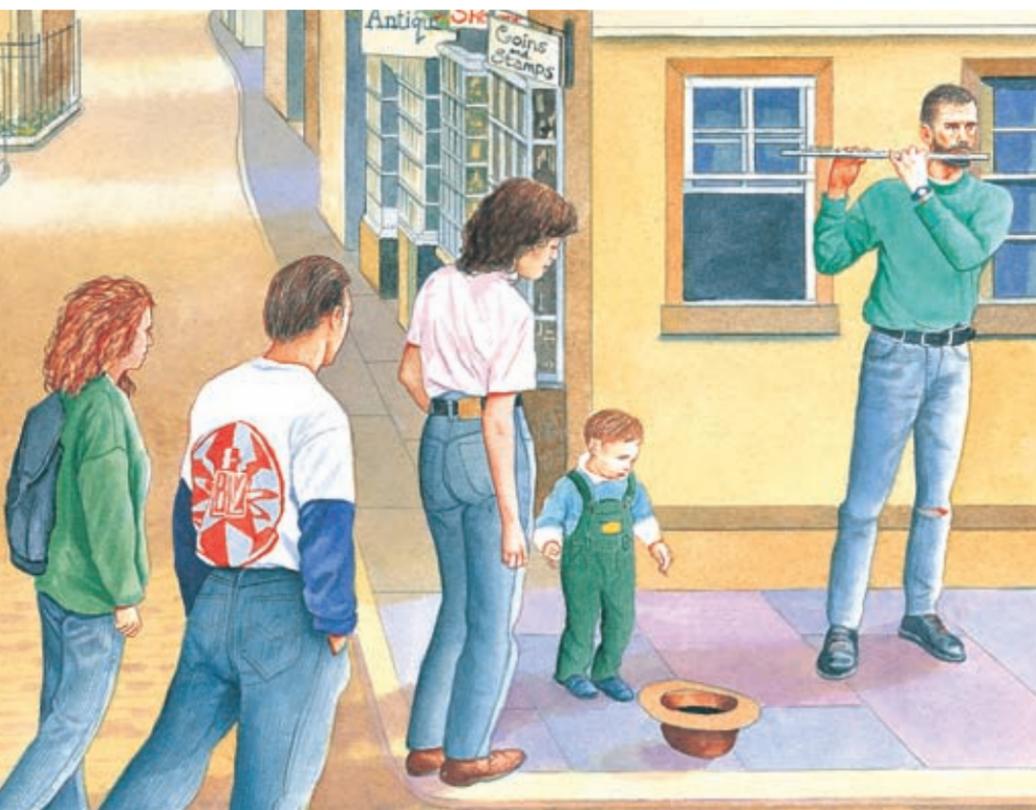
It’s quiet here, but Pete and Carla can hear music.

‘Look,’ Pete says. ‘That man is playing a flute. Let’s go and listen.’

They walk across the street and watch the man. Four or five people are listening.

‘Why is he playing here?’ Carla asks. ‘There aren’t many tourists in this street.’

‘No,’ Pete says. ‘And there are only three or four coins in his hat.’



Pete and Carla listen to the flute player. The tune is *Greensleeves*.

‘I know that tune!’ Carla says.

And she puts a coin in the man’s hat. Pete takes her hand.

‘Let’s go, Carla,’ he says to her. ‘Let’s see the shops in the next street.’

‘OK,’ Carla says. They walk away.

The flute player watches them but his tune, *Greensleeves*, doesn’t stop.

‘He isn’t a very good flute player,’ Pete says. ‘But it’s a good tune.’

‘There were only four coins in his hat,’ Carla says.

‘That’s because he isn’t very good,’ Pete says. ‘And he’s playing in the wrong street. The tourists are near the Abbey.’

They walk to the next street.

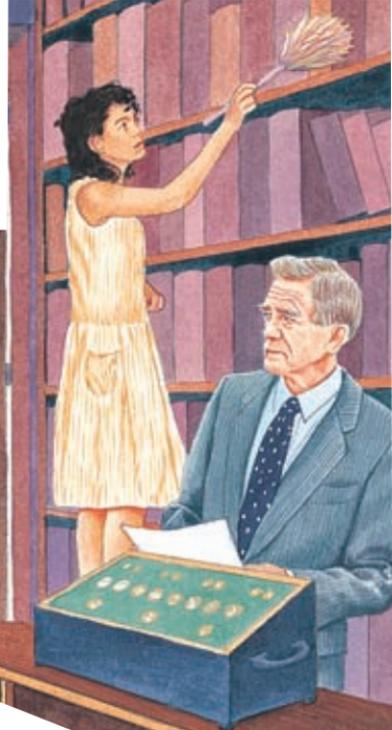
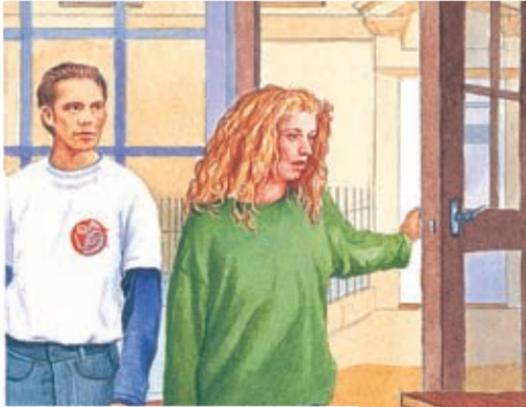


They find a little shop there. There are some old coins and stamps in the shop window. They come from many countries.

‘Let’s go in here,’ Carla says. ‘It’s an interesting little shop.’

‘OK,’ Pete says.

The shop is small. Pete and Carla go in, and an old man watches them. He is the shopkeeper.



‘Good afternoon,’ he says.

‘Good afternoon,’ Carla says.

‘Hi,’ Pete says.

‘What can I do for you?’ the shopkeeper says.

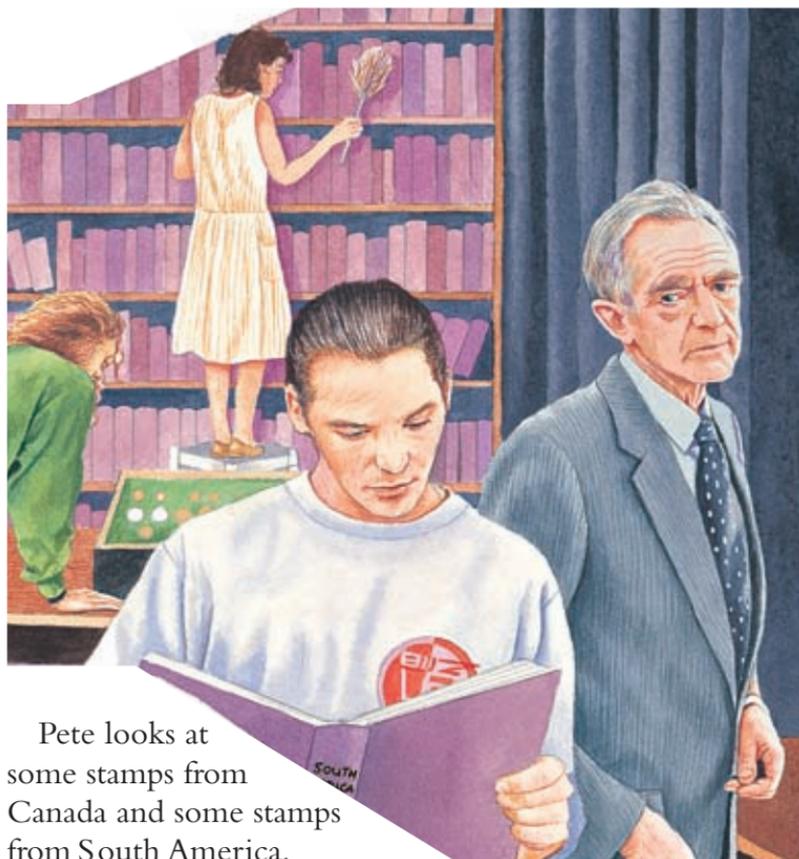
‘Can we look at the stamps?’ Pete asks.

The shopkeeper looks at them. ‘OK,’ he says. ‘Do you collect stamps?’

‘No, but I’m going to start collecting them,’ Pete says. ‘They’re interesting.’

‘Yes, they are,’ the shopkeeper says.





Pete looks at some stamps from Canada and some stamps from South America.

‘These are beautiful stamps,’ he says.

The shopkeeper stands near Pete and watches him.

‘He isn’t happy,’ Carla thinks. ‘Why? We aren’t going to steal his stamps.’

She looks at some coins.

‘Are these coins very old?’ Carla asks the old man.

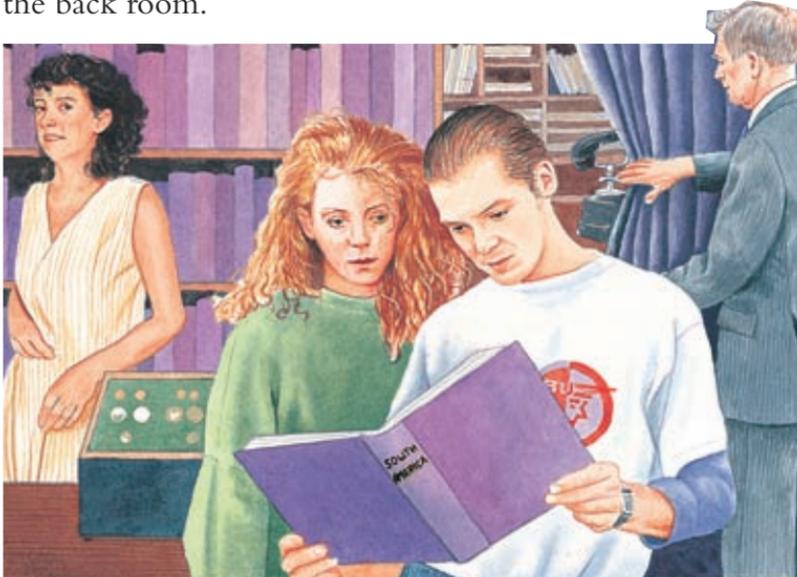
‘They’re 300 years old,’ says the shopkeeper. ‘They’re very valuable. Every coin in my shop is valuable.’

A girl is working in the shop, too. She looks at Carla. Carla smiles, but the girl doesn’t smile at her.

‘She isn’t very friendly,’ Carla thinks.

Suddenly they hear a telephone in the room behind the shop. The shopkeeper doesn't answer it for a minute. Then he looks at the girl and she looks at him. They don't speak, but Carla understands. The shopkeeper doesn't speak, but he is saying to the girl, 'Watch these students.'

'Excuse me,' he says to Carla and Pete. And he goes into the back room.



Pete is looking at the stamps. 'Come and see these, Carla,' he says. 'They're from South America. I want to start collecting them.'

But Carla doesn't like the people in this shop. They aren't very friendly, and she wants to look at the city.

'They're very expensive,' she says. 'Let's go, Pete.'

The girl watches them, and then she smiles.

'She's happy because we're going,' Carla thinks. 'But why?'

Pete and Carla go back into the big streets with the tourists. Carla is happy now because they are not in the shop.

But the sun is hot and Pete wants a drink. 'Let's go to a café near the Abbey,' he says. He wanted the stamps from South America, but he doesn't say this.

There are tables outside the café. Pete and Carla sit down. There are a lot of people in the café.

'Can we go into the Abbey next?' Carla asks. 'He wants the stamps from South America,' she thinks. 'But they're very expensive.'

'I want a drink first,' Pete says.

'OK,' Carla says, and she smiles at him.

Pete smiles at her, too.

After a minute or two they hear, 'Hey! There you are!'

Pete and Carla look up. It's the old man from the shop.

'What does he want?' Pete says.

'I don't know,' Carla says. 'But he's angry. What's wrong?'



The shopkeeper comes to the café. He is very angry.

‘Where are my coins?’ he says.

‘Your coins?’ Carla says. ‘I don’t understand.’

‘They’re missing!’ the shopkeeper says. ‘Did you steal them?’

Carla and Pete are surprised. The people at the tables near them

are surprised, too. They watch the two friends and the old man.

‘Steal your coins? No!’ Carla says. Her face is hot and red.

‘We didn’t steal any coins or stamps!’ Pete says. ‘What are you saying?’ He is angry now.

‘You’ve got my coins!’ the shopkeeper says. ‘The coins are missing, and this isn’t the first time. Some coins were missing last week. Some students had them, too, I think.’

‘Did you see the students with the coins?’ Pete says.

The old man doesn’t answer.

A policeman walks down the street to the café. He watches Carla and Pete and the shopkeeper. Then he says, ‘What’s wrong?’



‘These two students came into my shop,’ the shopkeeper says. ‘I went to the back room and answered the telephone. Then I went back into the shop. Some valuable coins were missing, and the two students were not in the shop.’

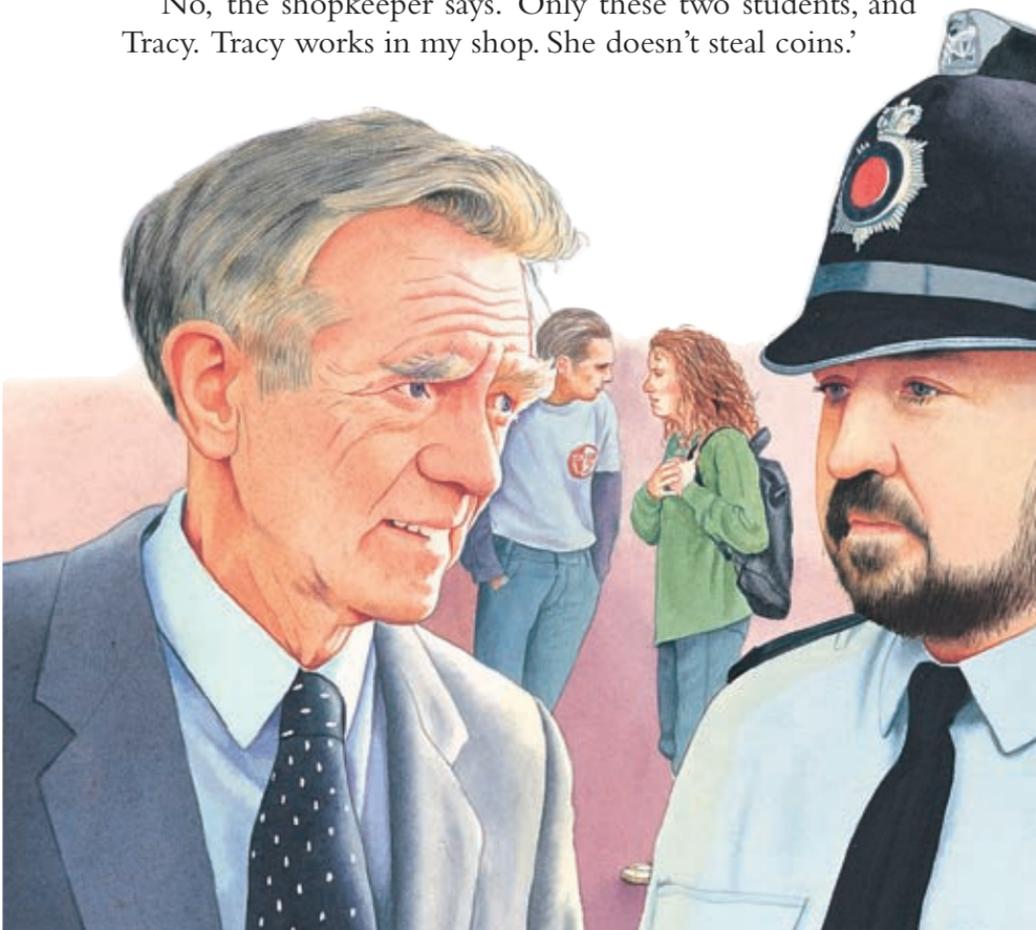
The policeman looks at Pete and Carla. ‘What do you say?’ he asks.

‘Yes, we went into the shop,’ Carla says. ‘We wanted to look at the stamps.’

‘But we didn’t steal them,’ Pete says. ‘And we didn’t take the coins.’

‘Were there many people in the shop?’ the policeman asks.

‘No,’ the shopkeeper says. ‘Only these two students, and Tracy. Tracy works in my shop. She doesn’t steal coins.’



‘How do you know?’ asks the policeman.

‘I looked in her bag and pockets today,’ the shopkeeper says. ‘And I looked in them last week.’

‘You can look in my bag,’ Carla says.

‘And you can look in my pockets,’ Pete says.

The shopkeeper is surprised. ‘Can I?’ he says.

‘Please look . . . please look now,’ Carla says. ‘We didn’t steal any coins.’ She gives him her bag.

